

Tennessee Department of Agriculture
Forestry Division
Ellington Agricultural Center
Box 40827, Melrose Station
Nashville, TN 37204
FAX: (615) 837-6003
Phone: (615) 837-5820

**Tennessee Department of Agriculture
Forestry Division**

Fax

To:	Mike Johanns	From:	Steven Scott
Fax:	202-720-2166	Pages:	3 including cover sheet
Phone:		Date:	12-22-05
Ref:		CC:	

☐ Urgent ☐ For Review ☐ Please Comment ☐ Please Reply ☐ Please Recycle

• Comments:



SOUTHERN GROUP OF STATE FORESTERS

December 22, 2005

Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-3355

RE: Farm Bill Forum Comments

Dear Secretary Johanns:

The Southern Group of State Foresters (SGSF) appreciates the opportunity to file comments relative to development of the 2007 Farm Bill pursuant to notice in the Federal Register (Vol. 70, No. 116, June 17, 2005). The SGSF is a 501(c)(3) professional organization that provides leadership in sustaining the economic, environmental and social benefits of the South's forests. Membership in the SGSF includes the respective state foresters in the 13 Southern states, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Considering the range of issues and influencing factors, the SGSF suggests that the 2007 Farm Bill should advance policies that (1) encourage the retention of forestland and minimize the impacts of forest fragmentation and parcelization, and (2) promote measures that achieve effective protection, restoration, and enhancement of sustainable forest conditions and health. The SGSF considers these policies to be central to any public or private sector strategy that would advocate the long-term durability and management of the South's forest resources.

Farm Bill discussions to promote the retention and sustainable management of forests should consider policies that enhance market opportunities, expand access to foreign and domestic markets, and explore innovations for developing marketplace potential for a wide range of multiple use purposes. The role of the free market may be the most powerful force in the foreseeable future that will impact the distribution of forestland and perhaps the existence of manageable forest cover in some regions. Competing land values associated with urban expansion, rural land development, and the transfer of extensive forest industry lands to management entities with relatively short-term investment objectives will also contribute to a trend of reduced and increasingly fragmented forestland in the South. Likewise, international markets and trade policies will be more dynamic and have an expanded influence on landowner decisions.

Alabama Forestry Commission • Arkansas Forestry Commission • Florida Division of Forestry
Georgia Forestry Commission • Kentucky Division of Forestry • Louisiana Office of Forestry
Mississippi Forestry Commission • North Carolina Division of Forest Resources • Oklahoma Forestry Services
Puerto Rico Forest Service • South Carolina Forestry Commission • Tennessee Division of Forestry
Texas Forest Service • U.S. Virgin Islands Forestry Program • Virginia Department of Forestry

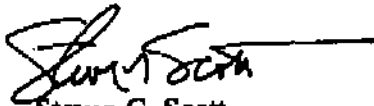
Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns
December 22, 2005
Page 2

The SGSF recognizes that there are several options and approaches for addressing national priorities and program direction for private forestland within the Farm Bill. While several different Titles have the potential to carry forest policy components, the SGSF is persuaded that an independent or separate forestry Title would be warranted particularly in the event of significant adjustments or program formulation. Such identity or profile within the Farm Bill gives emphasis to its purpose and the resolve of congress to address such matters.

While still preliminary in its examination of potential 2007 Farm Bill content, the SGSF anticipates that there are several important factors that will influence structure and priorities of the next Farm Bill. Budget constraints will necessitate continued efforts to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of services to private forest landowners. In that regard it will be important to ensure that programs and policies avoid potential duplication of services and emphasize improved interagency coordination. It is also expected that closer and more effective working relationships with local governments will become particularly important as community level networks will have increasingly profound impacts on the distribution and condition of forest resources. Beyond governmental relationships, more creative partnerships and collaboration with the private sector should also be a focus of Farm Bill considerations.

The Southern Group of State Foresters looks forward to continued dialogue and collaboration with the Department of Agriculture in the successful development of a 2007 Farm Bill package for private forestland and appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the effort.

Sincerely,



Steven G. Scott
Chair, Southern Group of State Foresters

Return Mail Address for Chair of SGSF:
Tennessee Department of Agriculture
Division of Forestry
P.O. Box 40627
Nashville, TN 37204

c: Members, Southern Group of State Foresters